



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

EVAN GLASS
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE;
LEAD FOR HOMELESSNESS AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marc Elrich, County Executive

FROM: Evan Glass, Councilmember, Lead for Homelessness & Vulnerable Communities

SUBJECT: School Resource Officers and Mental Health

DATE: March 2, 2021

In recent months you have heard from my Council colleagues, students, parents and other advocates about school resource officers (SROs) and the need to prioritize more mental health services for students. It is clear that we are all committed to finding a solution for this systemic issue.

Montgomery County has led the way in enacting a law outlining our commitment towards racial equity and social justice, recognizing the need to implement policies that are more reflective and inclusive of our diverse community. By maintaining the SRO program in its current form, the Office of Legislative Oversight confirms what many of us know: “this [program] will not advance racial equity and social justice in the County because it does not prioritize diminishing disparities in student arrests or suspensions by race, income, or disability status.”

I ask that your proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget includes police free schools and more mental health resources for students. Such an action would be in line with our shared policy goals of advancing racial justice.

MCPS students, particularly students of color, should not have more interactions with police officers than they do access to social workers. We must dismantle the school to prison pipeline — especially for students of color.

Maryland’s “Safe to Learn Act” stipulates that each local school system must have an SRO assigned to the school or that “adequate local law enforcement coverage” be provided. I believe that through the budget process, we can reach a balanced approach toward removing school resource officers from school campuses while still abiding by state law.

In addition, I request that mental health resources be increased by shifting funds to ensure that holistic mental health services are available and easily accessible to diagnose, treat and support students as well as their families. As we are now one year into the global crisis, I know many students are experiencing pandemic fatigue and increased depression. According to a survey conducted by Navigate360, 56% of teens have reported that they know someone who has considered self-harm or suicide but less than a third believe their school is prepared to address this concern.

Research has shown that prolonged exposure to stress is correlated with serious health concerns. We are still living in a health crisis and now more than ever, we need to safeguard the wellbeing of our youth. I am committed to working with you, my Council colleagues, Montgomery County Public Schools and the Montgomery County Board of Education to ensure that students have the physical, mental and emotional support that they need and deserve.

CC: Members of the County Council
Members of the Montgomery County Board of Education
Dr. Jack Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Marcus Jones, Chief, Montgomery County Police Department
Chiefs of Staff
Rich Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer
Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director, County Council
Caroline Sturgis, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer